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2004

## Book Review: The Montana Frontier: One Woman's West

Allison Badger  
*Tuttle University*

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Badger, Allison, "Book Review: The Montana Frontier: One Woman's West" (2004). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 232.

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*The Montana Frontier: One Woman's West.* By Joyce Litz. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. x + 251 pp. Photographs, map. \$23.95.

*The Montana Frontier: One Woman's West* traces the life of Joyce Litz's grandmother, Lillian Hazen, from her days as a New York newspaper columnist to her years on a Montana ranch. Using her grandmother's journals and her published and unpublished writings,

Litz describes a woman who grew up believing that a husband and children would ensure happiness and success. Yet, as Litz demonstrates, Hazen's life was anything but happy. Despite years of bankruptcy, drought, and a cheerless marriage, Hazen found ways to cope with her circumstances. Although Litz rarely delves into Hazen's emotional state, she believes Hazen's writing itself allowed her to survive.

With the exception of her newspaper columns, Hazen's compositions appear to reflect her inner thoughts, and it is through these personal musings that a clearer picture of Hazen emerges. She not only explored issues such as suffrage and birth control, but also drew attention to the demands ranching made of women. These articles provided Hazen with a creative outlet as well as income.

Accompanying Litz's narrative are brief overviews of Hazen's surroundings. While these forays into Montana history set the stage, they often contain facts that overwhelm and detract from Hazen's experiences. Though Litz uses Hazen to bring a feminine perspective to the post-World War One economic recession that struck the northern Great Plains, Hazen's voice becomes lost amid a myriad of historical facts. By the book's end, the biography of Lillian Hazen has become more a history of Montana. Furthermore, not all of Litz's information is accurate. One example includes the naming of Lewistown, Montana, which was not named after Captain Meriwether Lewis, but after Major William H. Lewis who established Fort Lewis in 1876.

An additional drawback of this volume is Litz's lack of documentation. In establishing the scene, Litz draws on a vast array of secondary sources which, along with primary documents, are not footnoted. This includes quotes from Hazen, the origins of which Litz fails to establish. The reader is therefore left wondering where Litz finds her facts as well as Hazen's works.

*The Montana Frontier* will appeal to fans of narrative history. In a style resembling Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* books, it illuminates a woman's life on the Great

Plains. Like Wilder, Litz is an excellent storyteller who fills a niche historians often neglect.

ALLISON BADGER  
Missoula, Montana